

VZCZCXR06606

RR RUEHFL RUEHKN RUEHMJ RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHPB RUEHQU

DE RUEHYE #0230/01 0451358

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

R 141358Z FEB 06

FM AMEMBASSY YEREVAN

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2455

INFO RUCNSCO/UNESCO COLLECTIVE

RUEHG/USMISSION GENEVA 0104

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000230

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/CARC, IO/UNESCO M. CHRISTINA NOVO

DEPT FOR IO/PPC RICHARD WILBUR AND EB/TPP/MTA LINDSAY CHASON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/13/2016

TAGS: ETRD SCUL UNESCO AM

SUBJECT: ARMENIA: UNESCO CONVENTION ON CULTURAL
EXPRESSIONS UPDATE

REF: A) STATE 19851 B) 05 YEREVAN 1818 C) 05 YEREVAN

2182

Classified By: DCM A.F. Godfrey for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) The UNESCO convention is not likely to appear on the Armenian Parliament's legislative agenda in 2006. There has been little or no media attention or public debate specifically directed at ratification of the Convention, but perception in Armenia of UNESCO in general is quite negative.

Public diplomacy products supporting the USG position on the convention may aid our efforts with the GOAM but will not likely change the already negative perception of UNESCO that regularly plays in Armenian media outlets. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On February 14, Armenian MFA National Commission for UNESCO Secretary-General Karina Danielyan told us the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had not yet distributed the UNESCO Convention to relevant ministries for comment and analysis. The process, she said, would likely take "more than half a year" before the convention is cleared for debate in the Armenian National Assembly. Given other priorities, Danielyan told us, the NA would not likely schedule the convention before "the end of 2006."

--On February 8, Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Arman Kirakossian told the Ambassador the GOAM was "disappointed" that UNESCO had failed to act on Armenian requests to halt the destruction of Armenian cultural monuments in the Nakhichevan region along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border (ref C). "UNESCO's done nothing for us," he told the Ambassador.

¶3. (C) Other Armenian leaders have also expressed public frustration with UNESCO's failure to respond to letters sent to Secretary General Koichiro Matsuura appealing for intervention in the Nakhichevan incident. Signatories, referenced in the following articles and editorials include: Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian (December 16), National Assembly Speaker Artur Bagdasarian (December 16), the Head of the Armenian Apostolic Church Catholicos Karekin II (December 16), and Armenian Ombudsman Larisa Alaverdyan (December 23).

¶4. (SBU) Coverage of UNESCO in the Armenian press is strictly limited to events surrounding the destruction of Armenian cultural monuments in the Nakhichevan region. Examples include:

--On February 10, Noyan Tapan News Agency reported that

opposition Justice Bloc Parliamentarian Viktor Dallakyan called on President Robert Kocharian to "raise the question of destruction of khatchkars (stones crosses) during Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations" with Azeri President Ilham Aliyev. "This issue concerns not only Armenian culture, but also Christian values," Dallakyan said, "and I'm sorry that UNESCO doesn't hear all this and doesn't take the respective steps."

--On February 7, Armenian A1-Plus news reported that "the Pan-Armenian Committee on Defense of Armenian Monuments" had submitted a list of "demands" to President Robert Kocharian, which included Kocharian petitioning UNESCO for Azerbaijan's expulsion.

--On February 7, Armenpress News Agency reported that Armenian National Assembly Deputy Speaker Vahan Hovhanissyan described UNESCO's silence, particularly following high-level Armenian appeals, on the destruction of Armenian cultural monuments in Nakhichevan as "shameful."

--On February 2, Noyan Tapan News Agency re-printed Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian's letter to UNESCO Secretary-General Koichiro Matsuura appealing for UNESCO intervention to stop the destruction of Armenian cultural monuments in Nakhichevan.

--On February 1, Arminfo News Agency reprinted an editorial from Italian 'La Stampa' news which Arminfo editors commented "represented the historical facts," criticizing the authorities of Azerbaijan, the UN and UNESCO for their "indifference."

--On January 12, AZG Armenian Daily published an editorial entitled: "UNESCO Remains Silent." The editorial noted "Ombudswoman Larisa Alaverdyan called on UNESCO to take

YEREVAN 00000230 002 OF 002

relevant measures for stopping the barbaric actions of Azerbaijan in the old graveyard of Julfa in Nakhichevan.

--On January 11, Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian told reporters at a press conference that Armenia had not yet received "any answer from UNESCO."

--On January 10, Noyan Tapan News Agency reported that the Archbishop of the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem sent a letter to UNESCO Secretary-General Koichiro Matsuura "expressing deep concern and indignation" for "the ongoing desecration and destruction of a medieval Armenian cemetery." The Archbishop "expressed hope that UNESCO would direct its international influence toward the Azerbaijani Government."

--On December 15, Armenpress News Agency reported that three dioceses of the Armenian Church in Iran "applied" to UNESCO and other international organizations "requesting swift reaction to another act of vandalism in the Armenian cemetery in the Julfa region in the Azerbaijani enclave of Nakhichevan." Armenian authorities, according to the article, had requested "several times" that UNESCO set up a commission to examine the damaged historical monuments.

EVANS